



## GCSE English & Mathematics – awarding grades for June 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Following the government announcement that all GCSE examinations have been cancelled this summer, we are aware how stressful the uncertainty around this year's GCSEs is for students and families. Ofqual, the Government regulator of qualifications, has recently released guidance setting out the expectations for schools and college when assessing student performance and how grades will be determined in the absence of examinations.

As your child is currently studying GCSE English Language and/or GCSE Mathematics at UCB, we are writing to you in regards to how UCB are determining and awarding GCSE grades this academic year.

### **Teacher Assessment Grades (TAGs):**

GCSE English and Mathematics lecturers will be asked to arrive at an **evidence-based judgement** regarding the grade that a student will be awarded. This evidence must focus on what the student knows and what they can do. Lecturers are also required to assess enough of the qualification content in order to make sure that their judgement is robust and free from bias.

The following information outlines specific activities taking place for GCSE English and GCSE Maths.

If you or your child have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact your child's maths/ English lecturer.

GCSE results will be released on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021. On this day, members of staff will be available to offer guidance and support regarding next steps. We will also be able to provide guidance regarding the appeals process, as outlined by JCQ and Eduqas. Please note, any appeals will be based purely on evidence.

Kind Regards

Nikki Brady  
Executive Director for Further Education Quality Enhancement

Accredited by The University of Birmingham



**Professor Michael Harkin • Vice-Chancellor & Principal**  
University College Birmingham • Summer Row • Birmingham B3 1JB  
Main Switchboard: 0121 604 1000 • [www.ucb.ac.uk](http://www.ucb.ac.uk)



## GCSE English

Since September 2020, lecturers have taught (and therefore will assess) all four units of the Eduqas GCSE English Language specification:

- Component 1:A Reading (20<sup>th</sup> Century Literature – fiction)
- Component 1:B Writing (Creative Prose Writing)
- Component 2:A Reading (19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Non-fiction)
- Component 2B Writing (non-fiction and persuasive writing)

### ***How students have been supported with their GCSE English since September 2020:***

- Students have had one classroom or “live” lesson each week, and one pre-recorded lesson each week which students access via Canvas.
- Students have been given multiple opportunities to submit work and receive feedback via Canvas (so that teacher marking can be seen as fair and transparent).
- We have also supported students with extra resources, revision guides, videos and the recording of live classroom lessons where possible to accommodate learners who were shielding. All live lessons delivered online during lockdown were recorded and are available for students to re-visit via Canvas. All students have the same opportunity to approach CASE for additional support with their work. Students have been given feedback on their work with ideas on how they can improve.
- We stress that students are responsible for submitting work. Where work was not submitted, students were given multiple reminders verbally during lessons, via email, via Dashboard (so their vocational Personal Tutors were aware) and, wherever possible, we endeavoured to also inform parents/guardians. Students have been made aware that non-submission of work may impact their final grade.
- As always, work is marked in accordance with exam board criteria. As such, the quality of submitted work will determine the outcome of a student’s GCSE.

### ***How will grades be calculated?***

To meet the requirements of Ofqual, JCQ and Eduqas, we will be holding a series of in-class assessments between Easter and May half term (w/c 31<sup>st</sup> May), in order to give all students the opportunity to demonstrate their levels of knowledge and understanding, under controlled conditions. We must stress that these are not exams, and will not be conducted in exam conditions. However, the conditions in which students complete the tasks will need to have an element of quality assurance in order to make the process fair and impartial. This includes completing tasks within a set time frame (usually their English lesson) and all students completing the same tasks during a teaching week.

Eduqas are providing materials for these assessments and we will carefully select tasks that reflect the study our learners have been able to complete.

Due to the preparations and support outlined above, we deem these assessments to be the fairest and most appropriate opportunity for students to demonstrate their levels of knowledge and understanding, in a manner that enables lecturers to make an impartial

judgement about each students' performance. We therefore expect the outcomes of these in-class assessments to be the primary evidence that is used when providing grading judgements to the exam board.

The purpose of these in-class assessments is to ascertain an accurate reflection of a learner's ability. This means being able to demonstrate and apply what they have learnt without the input of a teacher or anyone else.

Additionally, we are pleased that the guidance also allows us to take into account supporting evidence from student performance records based on work produced from September 2020 to date. However, this evidence will need to be robust, valid and reliable. We are currently waiting for further guidance from Ofqual as to how we might be able to use such evidence and how it should be weighed.

A student's in year performance record will not be used if it disadvantages them. For example, when the in-class assessment performance is better than the student's performance record, it will not be used to lower the grade that we suggest for that student.

***What should students do to prepare and what do I need to know as a parent/guardian?***

Students should be advised that the work they have done, are doing, and will do is extremely important. Using the feedback from such activities is vital for enhancing performance in the post-Easter in-class assessments. Students have access to a revision and support page on Canvas, which includes videos and support materials. Students will also be signposted to extra English intervention sessions each week, in order to help them further prepare for their in-class assessment. Lesson resources for the academic year are still available on our individual tutor Canvas Homepages, in order to give students the best possible chance of doing well this summer we would ask that you encourage and support your child to access all of the materials available to them.

## GCSE Maths

### ***What learners have covered and will be assessed on:***

- Number
- Algebra
- Ratio, proportion and rates of change
- Geometry and measures
- Probability
- Statistics

(All six areas of the Pearson Edexcel GCSE Mathematics specification)

We will assess students on both Non-calculator and Calculator skills.

### ***How learners have been supported since September 2020***

All learners have had one lecturer led session (either in class or online each week)  
MathsWatch tasks set for independent learning (equal in length to an additional session)  
each week, with video examples to support them if needed.

Opportunity to have additional tutoring.

Please be assured we have taught topics that students struggle with to support their chances to obtain a grade 4 or better.

### ***How grades will be calculated/assessment methods***

As we normally do for internal assessments, we will mainly use a range of assessment material provided by our exam board - Pearson Edexcel, such as secure mock exams and shadow papers. These secure papers are only available to registered colleges and schools via a password system meaning students will not have prior access to them.

We believe this will be the fairest and most robust way for students to demonstrate their current ability, understanding of mathematical concepts and problem-solving skills and for staff to determine learners' grades.

We held two mock assessments in March and for the next six weeks learners will complete short assessments during their teaching sessions under controlled conditions on set topics. These topics are listed weekly on CANVAS and via the class lecturer.

### ***What should learners do to prepare and what do I need to know as a parent/guardian?***

- Learners must attend all lessons and complete MathsWatch activities
- Sign up to tutoring if not done so far and attend the sessions
- Revise topics on the weekly lists – lots of links and questions on CANVAS
- If learners missed one of the mock papers before Easter they can catch up with these, by speaking to their maths lecturer and arranging a suitable time to redo them.